

Learning everyday, Nursing everyday

**Julia Cheung, Nursing student,
McGill University (Montreal, Canada)**





“Why did you choose to come to Hualien for your internship?” This question has arisen on multiple occasions during my five weeks in this beautiful city. Initially, my goal was simply to challenge myself and complete my internship in Asia. During my preparation, I came across the Hualien Tzu Chi Medical Center, where a previous McGill nursing student had attended two years ago. I did a handful of research about Hualien prior to my internship in order to prepare myself for the upcoming challenge.

Throughout my flight to Taiwan, I felt an immense excitement for discovery and adventure. As I landed in Taipei and took the train to Hualien, I sensed a feeling of the unknown. It was my first time travelling alone to a country, where the main language is not English or French. I studied Chinese during my childhood and teenage years, and learned how to read and write traditional Chinese. However, my mandarin was only average

due to lack of practice. I have always been independent. Hence, I was ready to confront the obstacles ahead of me.

The first two weeks in Hualien were difficult, as I was extremely homesick. Fortunately I encountered amazing and welcoming staff members at the hospital and roommates who made me feel like home. They helped me incorporate into the new society, and treated me like a family member. I felt fortunate to have encountered such beautiful people.

Hualien is a magnificent city encompassing breathtaking sceneries. Luckily I had the chance to visit some of the main tourist attractions, and admire the beauty of nature.

The population of focus of my internship was the pediatric population. I completed my first two weeks in the pediatric ward where I encountered amazing staff and strong children. The nursing staff worked efficiently

as a team. I was amazed with their time management skills and their capability of caring for eight patients sometimes. Although the nurse:client ratio is quite high, the nurses manage to offer holistic and quality care to the client and their family members.

I had the opportunity to bond with a two years old girl who came in for her leukemia treatment. When I first met her, I knew she was not just an ordinary two year-old kid. Despite her sickness, she was very positive and joyous, as she sang and danced with the staff. She also had to learn and accept a port-a-cath inserted in her body for treatment. She had such great inner-strength and maturity that she complied very well care. Two weeks later, she came back for a checkup and blood test, and had asked a nurse to pass on the message to me that she's a brave kid and isn't afraid of needles no more. I was so blessed to hear this. Although sickness is a sin, it does bring maturity and help a child grow stronger in life. I later interned in the neonatal/pediatric intensive care unit, the neonatal observation room and finally the birthing room. It was a tremendous honor to be able to shadow and learn from the nursing staff.

Furthermore, family involvement is an important aspect of care. I have seen parents coming in early in the morning, staying all day and overnight by their child's bedside. Others have been bringing their child every week for blood tests and injection for the past 3 years. The love parents have for their child is generous and endless.

Nowadays, many organizations are focused on being environmentally friendly.

Hualien Tzu Chi Medical Center implemented an incredible recycling system. At the beginning, I was puzzled as to how does the staff have the time to separate and recycle all the medical waste. I thought it would take an eternity to do so. The truth is: I was wrong. In reality, it only takes a couple of minutes to separate the waste into its respective bin. Small gestures bring you a long way. This made me reflect on our practice in Canada. I have come to realize that we waste a lot of material and don't have such recycling program. I really hope that one day a similar program can be implemented.

In addition, I had the opportunity to volunteer in their free-clinic and medical outreach day in Taitung. It was a meaningful experience, where I helped out taking vital signs on admission and visited some elderly who lived further and did not have the transportation means to come to the clinic. This outreach day fully reflected the Tzu Chi philosophy of love. Furthermore, this experience made me reflect and realize how our societies are alike. Wherever we go, the population is growing older and need our care the most, especially in remote areas.

During my stay in Hualien, I learned about Tzu Chi every day, and perceived the trust and respect Taiwanese people have towards Tzu Chi. While, I come from an atheist family, I do agree with Tzu Chi's values of helping the ones in need and spreading boundless love and care. If you asked me again: "Why did you choose to come to Hualien for your internship?" I would respond: "To learn how to nurse with love, 大愛."